

Peer-review report of

Jasini, A., Cochez, A., & Mesquita, B. (2025). The paradoxical effect of emotional acculturation in discriminatory contexts: school adjustment of immigrant minority youth. *advances.in/psychology*, 2, e229104. <https://doi.org/10.56296/aip00039>

Round 1

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your important work to our special issue. We see clear merit in your research, but before sending it out for review, we kindly request that you adjust the framing of your manuscript to more explicitly align with the objectives of the special issue, as outlined in our previous communications:

1. **Objectives Alignment:** Your submission should clearly connect to the special issue's objectives in both the abstract and main text. Specifically, we encourage you to frame your work in the context of the current debate regarding the role of acculturation in adaptation.

2. **Recommendations for Future Research:** To stimulate hypothesis generation and innovation, please conclude your paper with a dedicated section outlining clear recommendations for future acculturation research (you do so to some extent, so this would just require some extension). Briefly mentioning these recommendations in the abstract will further enhance the impact of your work.

Given your statement that "Evidence for the effects of implicit acculturation on minority adjustment is almost completely lacking," we believe **your research could make a valuable contribution by addressing the gap in knowledge surrounding implicit acculturation's role in adaptation, especially considering the questionable evidence for explicit acculturation's impact.** On a related note, while you mention "modest, though inconsistent, support for the idea that explicit acculturation impacts the adjustment of the acculturating," it is important to recognize that the majority of the cited references rely on correlational data, which means they cannot demonstrate a causal impact. However, this limitation can be leveraged to strengthen your case and contribution by suggesting that while explicit acculturation may not play a significant role, implicit acculturation could, under certain conditions (e.g., discrimination).

We believe these changes can be accomplished without major revisions or a significant time investment. Much of it can be addressed by rephrasing the abstract,

adding a couple of paragraphs to the introduction, and more clearly reconnecting to the special issue topic in the discussion section. If additional word count is needed to accommodate these changes, you may utilize an extra 1000 words.

We look forward to receiving your revised manuscript.

Best regards,

Jonas R. Kunst & David L. Sam

Round 2

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your important work to our special issue on "Acculturation Reimagined" and for reframing the paper to better align with this theme. The focus on the topic is now very clear. We were fortunate to receive reviews from two experts in developmental and school perspectives on acculturation. Their feedback is exceptionally detailed and constructive, and we extend our gratitude for their thorough work. Additionally, we both independently evaluated the manuscript before reviewing their assessments.

Your work demonstrates numerous strengths. The topic is undoubtedly significant. Your focus on implicit acculturation is original and offers the potential to bring valuable nuance to the discourse on acculturation's role in adaptation. The use of a relatively large sample and longitudinal data further enhances the quality of your research. The paper is also generally well-structured and written.

Nevertheless, there remains room for improvement. Rather than repeating the reviewers' points, which are already well articulated, we ask that you address each of their comments or provide a rebuttal in your revision. As their requests are diverse, we grant you an additional 1500 words.

When addressing the comments from Reviewer 2 about domain-specificity, look at the Specificity principle in acculturation by Bornstein (Bornstein, M. H. (2017). The specificity principle in acculturation science. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 12(1), 3-45.)

In addition, please address the following:

Formatting and Style (APA7 Compliance)

- Please italicize statistical symbols (e.g., *N*, *SD*) except for Greek letters in line with APA7.
- Please italicize scale endpoints (e.g., *strongly agree*), in line with APA7.
- Please make sure to follow APA7 in terms of heading format, especially when it comes to capitalization.
- Table formats and figures do also not fully comply with APA7. Pay particular attention to lines and the format of figure captions.
- Please present all statistics with two digits, except for *p*-values that should be presented in three digits.
- There is some inconsistency in the use of curly or straight '. Please be consistent in their use.

Typos and Grammatical Issues

- Small typo ('on' should be 'in'): "We are interested on the benefits and costs of emotional acculturation"
- In one instance, you write, "emotionally fit". Please correct.
- On page 10, you list all the 16 emotional words. Thus, it is best to do away with the expression "included"
- Prompts should be plural here: "two socially engaging prompt". Also, since you only seem to present one prompt as an example, it should be "e.g." not "i.e.". The same applies to the next sentence on situations.
- There is an extra comma here: "towards the heritage culture, (e.g., Dimitrova et al., 2015),"
- Can you explain which countries qualify as neighbouring countries to Belgium?
- There is a missing number (Wave 1) in this sentence: "The model with emotional fit at wave 1 as predictor of minorities' behavioral engagement at school at wave 2, controlling for participants' age, gender, and their behavioral engagement at school at wave, fit the data better than the controls-only model $\Delta-2LL(1) = 7.061$, $p = 0.008$ ". There is also one extra) that is not needed.

Statistical Reporting and Analysis

- You use inferential statistics. Thus, you cannot conclude that, "Minorities' perceived discrimination at school did not moderate the association between minorities' emotional fit and their majority contact over time." Change to "did not statistically significantly predict" here and for any similar sentence.

- Please provide exact p -values in all tables reporting multi-level results instead of using cutoffs indicated by *. Also, instead of SEs, present 95% CIs (like you did in the correlation table). Please entirely omit a focus on $p < .10$.
- Present the stats for all slopes in the figures in text, including those that are not statistically significant. Also, for all slopes, present 95% CIs statistics in addition to the p -values in text.
- Please indicate what statistical software and libraries were used and provide version numbers and references to them. Also, please upload to a repository and make publicly available the code needed to reproduce the analyses.

Visualizations and Tables

- As the moderations are remarkably similar, please merge the interaction plots into one multi-panel figure that shows all the plots at once. In this figure, you also only need one figure legend that preferably should be presented on top.
- You need to refer to Table 1 at least once in text.
- In addition, we would prefer figures in colors if possible, to further guide insights (this will also allow you to retain individual data points without cluttering the visual representation; contrasting with one reviewer, we believe that retaining the data points is a strength.)

Methodological Clarifications

- You write, "We calculated emotional fit scores only for participants who rated nine (out of 12) emotion items." Please explain to readers why this was the case.
- Similar to one of the reviewers, we encourage you to either discuss as a limitation that you did not control for autoregressions between variables (e.g., discrimination at W2 was not controlled for), or alternatively including these in your models. Please also justify this analytical choice already in the methods.

Content and Discussion

- The statement "Our study has few limitations." Can be misunderstood as stating that there are not many limitations. This is likely not what you want to convey. Please revise.
- Please keep the same number of variables that were used to test your hypotheses (contrary to the comment by one reviewer).

References and Citations

- There are a couple of missing references and smaller inconsistencies. Please address the issues highlighted in the citation report:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16LNZHdXPWiL78xobnWVqHhIjw1aOqsbS/view?usp=sharing>

We look forward to receiving your revised manuscript. Please address all points raised by the reviewers and our additional comments above to strengthen your valuable contribution to the special issue. Please submit a revision letter that outlines your changes and also includes excerpts exemplifying them.

We kindly request that you submit your revised manuscript within one month, by May 6, 2025. If you require additional time or have any questions regarding the revision process, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you again for your contribution to this important area of research. We believe that with these revisions, your work will make a significant impact in advancing our understanding of implicit acculturation processes in adaptation.

Best,

Jonas R. Kunst & David L. Sam

Reviewer 1:

I am happy to have the opportunity to review the manuscript titled "The paradoxical effect of emotional acculturation in discriminatory contexts: school adjustment of immigrant minority youth at school", which aligns well with the focus of the special issue in *Advances in Psychology*. The manuscript aims to address the nexus of emotional fit (i.e., implicit acculturation) with adjustment, particularly in terms of school-specific and intergroup-related outcomes, while considering the moderating effect of discrimination in school. As a young acculturation researcher of color, I found the paper both insightful and highly engaging. While the manuscript offers a valuable contribution to the acculturation research, there are areas that could be further clarified. I provide my comments below.

Finally, I have included certain references in my revision letter, some of which are my own works. While I believe these references could help strengthen the manuscript, their inclusion is not intended to impose any obligation to cite them. I encourage the authors to consider these references only if they find them relevant and beneficial to their work. Overall, I hope my comments are helpful in strengthening this nice piece of work.

Savaş Karataş, PhD

Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany

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Major points

*On p. 6, lines 6–12, the authors provide a clear discussion of the ongoing debate on the explicit acculturation–adjustment link. However, the connection between this debate and the implicit acculturation–adjustment link could be elaborated further in this section.

*What I like in this study is about having domain-specific acculturative elements (next to implicit and explicit acculturation distinction). However, the current version would benefit from a stronger theoretical foundation on domain-specific acculturation models (e.g., Navas et al., 2005; Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004, 2006). Integrating these conceptual models could enhance clarity regarding the importance of domain-specific conditions in understanding both explicit and implicit acculturation processes and their links to (domain-specific) adjustment/adaptation outcomes. Herein, my recent review (Karataş, 2024) may also provide further insights.

Arends-Tóth, J., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2004). Domains and dimensions in acculturation: Implicit theories of Turkish–Dutch. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2003.09.001>

Arends-Tóth, J., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2006). Issues in the conceptualization and assessment of acculturation. In M. H. Bornstein & L. R. Cote (Eds.), *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development*. Lawrence Erlbaum.33–62 doi:10.4324/9780415963589-3

Karataş, S. (2024). Zooming in on proximal life domains: A literature review on family, peer, and school dynamics in adolescents' acculturation and psychosocial adjustment. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2024.2433754>

Navas, M., Garcia, M. C., Sanchez, J., Rojas, A. J., Pumares, P., & Fernandez, J. S. (2005). Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM): New contributions with

regard to the study of acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.04.001>

*Following this, the rationale for focusing solely on the school context/domain should be introduced earlier in the paper. Currently, this appears in the Discussion section but would be clearer if presented in the Introduction, ideally after introducing the aforementioned domain-specific conceptual models.

*My major concern with this manuscript is the lack of clarity in formulating the study hypotheses. While they are highly intriguing, they currently come a bit out of the blue. This is likely due to a lack of organization and theoretical grounding. For example, a clearer description of the outcomes would be helpful. Specifically, although there is a hypothesis about intergroup contact in school, the main premises of contact theory are not addressed. Similarly, school engagement consists of multiple subdimensions, which are introduced for the first time in the Method section. The authors might consider structuring the hypotheses into subsections and providing a strong theoretical foundation for each.

*Importantly, based on my reading, Hypothesis 2 proposes testing emotional fit as the moderating variable rather than the discriminatory school climate.

*Would it be possible to provide additional information about the participants, such as generational status and family SES?

*Thanks so much for providing a detailed description of Emotional Fit with Majority Culture. I wonder whether this variable could also be created for T2. If so, given that the effects of T1 outcome variables were controlled, would it be possible to test the study hypotheses using a multi-level CLPM (see Hillekens et al., 2018 for a similar approach)? This could help capture the extent to which emotional fit at T1 predicts the outcome variables while accounting for the stability of both predictors and outcomes across two time points. I understand that this may result in a complex model with potential convergence issues, but it could offer valuable insights into the interplay under investigation.

Hillekens, J., Baysu, G., & Phalet, K. (2019). Compatible or conflicting? Peer norms and minority and majority adolescents' acculturation patterns. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 65, Article 101074. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2019.101074>

*The relatively lower Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the Perceived Discrimination at School and School Engagement measures inevitably require testing their structural validity within this specific sample.

*Additional details on power considerations would be helpful. Could you please clarify how the current sample size supports the use of multilevel models?

*The Results section is well-written. My only minor remark concerns the figures—would it be possible to make them more readable? Perhaps retaining only the lines could help address this point.

*Once again, I find the Results section well-structured. However, while reading it, I felt that the number of analyses/results might be quite extensive for a single paper. Of course, this is a humble suggestion, but the authors might consider omitting one outcome variable. Perhaps intergroup contact may be excluded as school engagement is more directly linked to the ongoing debate on the acculturation–adjustment link.

*Overall, I enjoyed reading the Discussion section. However, a more detailed and specific elaboration on the practical and theoretical implications of the findings would strengthen this section. In addition, the authors might elaborate more specifically on the unexpected findings. For example, in schools with lower levels of discrimination, minority youth may already experience a general sense of inclusion and acceptance, which could reduce the additional benefits of emotional acculturation. If the school climate is already supportive, school engagement may depend more on other factors, such as identity development shaped largely by heritage cultural maintenance (not by destination culture adoption; see Crocetti et al., 2024), rather than emotional fit with the majority culture.

Crocetti, E., Karataş, S., Branje, S., Bobba, B., & Rubini, M. (2024). Navigating across heritage and destination cultures: How personal identity and social identification processes relate to domain-specific acculturation orientations in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53(2), 397–415.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01870-y>

*On page 30, line 10, the authors mention “feedback loops”. It may be helpful to consider citing the domain-specific models of Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2004, 2006).

Minor points

*In the Abstract (if space permits), a brief description of the explicit acculturation processes could be provided, as the current form does not fully inform the readers.

*Could you please use italics for N and SD?

Reviewer 2:

I reviewed the paper “The paradoxical effect of emotional acculturation in discriminatory contexts: school adjustment of immigrant minority youth at school”. The authors investigated how emotional acculturation of minority youth in Belgium relates to contact with majority members as well as to school engagement over time, as well as whether this relation is moderated by a discriminatory school climate. Results suggest that emotional acculturation positively predicted contact with majority group members, but negatively predicted school engagement, particularly among those students who perceived a high discriminatory climate at school.

From my perspective, the focus of the paper on implicit acculturation, in the form of emotional acculturation, is a strength and has the potential to make an interesting

contribution to the literature on the acculturation-adjustment link. Overall, the paper is clearly structured, cites relevant literature, and is clearly written. In addition, from my perspective, the authors responded to the editor's comment regarding the fit to the special issue very well, so that the contribution to the topic of the special issue is now mostly clear.

However, I have some suggestions that may help strengthen the paper:

Introduction

- Even though I generally find the distinction between explicit and implicit acculturation valuable, I find the explanation of implicit acculturation in the paper a bit hard to follow (i.e., “that culture and the mind make each other up”, “accommodation of the psychological functions”). Is explicit acculturation (e.g. changes in identity) not also an accommodation of psychological functions? What distinguishes explicit from implicit acculturation? E.g., is implicit acculturation typically unconscious? What may be other examples of implicit acculturation, other than emotions?
- The contribution of this paper to the existing literature could be made clearer. I agree with you that most previous research has examined explicit, instead of implicit, acculturation. But it seems like there have been some papers that have looked at the relation between implicit acculturation and several aspects of adjustment (e.g., Consedine et al., 2014; Jasini et al., 2023). Please state specifically what additional knowledge your paper contributes compared to these papers?
- The paragraph on page 7 (“We expect that the specific school climate...”) begins without any transition from the previous paragraph. Relatedly, the beginning of the introduction seems to be mainly about acculturation in general, without mention of the specific target group (i.e., secondary school students) and context (i.e., secondary school) of this study. It would be helpful to more clearly situate your study within the specific target population and context, e.g., what role does the specific developmental stage of your participants play for emotional acculturation, what does successful adjustment look like among adolescents who are still in school, etc.
- Relatedly, the choice of outcome variables is not explained. Why did you choose these adjustment outcomes? How do they fit into existing acculturation frameworks of psychological and sociocultural adjustment? What role does school adjustment play in this framework?
- Throughout the text, the concept of a discriminatory school climate seems to be used interchangeably with the concepts of discrimination experiences or discrimination perceptions. School or classroom climate are inherently school- or classroom-level constructs, which should be modelled, for example, through shared perceptions of the school or classroom context (see for

example Marsh et al., 2012). In line with other measures of school or classroom climate, the items used in the present study ask what the students perceive to be happening at school. This, however, is different from asking whether each student themselves has been a target of discrimination. To solve this issue, you could 1) more clearly distinguish which previous papers have looked at effects of individually experienced discrimination vs. a discriminatory climate, and b) include climate as a level 2 variable in your multilevel analyses.

Marsh, H. W., Lüdtke, O., Nagengast, B., Trautwein, U., Morin, A. J. S., Abduljabbar, A. S., & Köller, O. (2012). Classroom climate and contextual effects: Conceptual and methodological issues in the evaluation of group-level effects. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(2), 106–124.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2012.670488>

- “in contexts characterized by high levels of discrimination, *acculturation* can become a liability” → do you mean here that a strong orientation towards the majority/assimilation can become a liability? Because technically, acculturation could be expressed through integration, assimilation, separation, or similar, and not all of these may be a liability?
- Please make sure you are not using causal language throughout (e.g., “our second hypothesis is that perceived discrimination at school leads to worse school adjustment”)

Method

- You use the term “minority” to describe your sample, without further differentiation. However, “minority” is a very broad term that encompasses a wide range of different groups, which may make very different experiences during the acculturation process, e.g., depending on the immigrant generation or the specific heritage country. For example, some of the students classified as “minority” in your study may be white students (e.g., with heritage from Northern Europe) who are not targeted by systemic racism, and are thus differentially affected by a discriminatory school climate. Therefore, I strongly recommend to provide more details about your sample (e.g., regarding immigrant generation and the most common heritage countries), and to incorporate central variables (e.g., immigrant generation, potentially also membership in a more or less stigmatized group) into your analyses, for example as control variables or moderators.
- It is not super clear to me yet why you excluded participants from schools where 60% or more of the student body consisted of minority students. This is a really big number, with 626 students excluded. Could you just include the proportion of minority students as a moderator? Or at least conduct robustness checks with the whole sample?

- Please add whether you received ethical approval for the data collection, and whether informed consent was active or passive
- I personally am not familiar with the method of profile correlations and would find it very helpful to have a slightly more elaborate explanation for this in the paper. E.g., how do you compute an average 12-emotion item profile? Is it just one score in the end?
- The items capturing discriminatory school climate don't actually seem to capture a discriminatory climate, but rather whether teachers treat all students equally or intervene with discrimination. For example, the reverse score of the item "teachers say that you shouldn't discriminate students with another culture or origin" is used to represent discriminatory school climate. However, if teachers do not say that students shouldn't discriminate other students, is this really enough to infer that the climate is marked by discrimination? In other studies based on the same dataset (e.g., Baysu et al., 2024), some of the same items used here seem to have been labelled "multiculturalism", which, however, may also not be fully in line with other conceptualizations of multiculturalism. Perhaps you can find a more accurate name for these items, or acknowledge limitations of the items in the discussion.
- Related to my comment in the introduction regarding discriminatory school climate, to actually model school climate, you could model it as a level 2 variable in the multilevel model, in addition to including the students' individual perceptions of the school climate at level 1.
- The reliability of the scale assessing non-compliant behavior is quite bad (e.g., $\alpha = .55$). The item "how often do you get a punishment in school?" may also reflect how likely a teacher is to punish students, instead of being an indicator of a students' actual behavior? If you cannot change the scales used, please acknowledge their limitations in the discussion.
- In the "Analytical strategy" section, the analyses could be described a bit more clearly, particularly regarding the multilevel nature of the analyses. For example, you say that you conducted multilevel regressions, but do not specify which variables were used at each level? Only later on from the tables, I understood that there were no predictors actually entered at level 2. This could be made clearer in the text as well, or you could actually include predictors at level 2 (such as school climate).
- The power considerations are a bit vague, it would be helpful to be a bit more concrete here (e.g., concerning multilevel regressions, how many units did you have on level 2, etc.)

Results

- Overall, the results are described clearly. However, my comments from above regarding the conflated use of "discriminatory school climate" and "perceived discrimination" apply here as well.

- Half of the sample completed the questions referring to socially engaging emotions, and the other half the questions about non-engaging emotions, right? However, these seem to not have been distinguished in the analyses. Did you check whether results differed based on whether participants responded to the socially engaging or non-engaging emotion questions? For example, depending on the heritage cultures of your participants and the respective level of individualism and collectivism, may it be easier for them to achieve fit with regards to non-engaging emotions rather than to socially engaging emotions?

Discussion

- The discussion addresses a few points that I was missing in the introduction, for example by addressing the role of the school as a developmental context for minority youth. Maybe some of these points could be integrated into the introduction to address some of my comments from above.
- In the discussion you state that some of your findings are replications of previous research (e.g., Jasini et al., 2023). This could be made clearer in the introduction, which parts are a replication and which parts contribute new knowledge to the literature.
- Minor issue: “Previous research has suggested that individual perceptions may be unrelated to these school-level factors” à whose individual perceptions? The students’?
- You say in the discussion that you findings differ from a lot of previous acculturation research that has focused on explicit acculturation. I would find it interesting to delve a bit more into the question why implicit and explicit acculturation may show different relations to adjustment? This could be an important theoretical contribution to acculturation research, and to the special issue.

Round 3

Dear Authors,

Thank you for your exceptionally rigorous attention to the reviewers’ and editors’ comments. We appreciate the care with which you addressed each point and the additional analyses that have further strengthened your manuscript. The paper is now very close to meeting the publication threshold; however, a few minor revisions are still required:

1. “School motivation, school behavioral engagement and disengagement, and norm related behaviors at school are considered some of the most important indicators of socio-cultural adjustment of minority youth in schools.” Please add an appropriate reference for this statement.

2. The internal consistency of one measure remains low ($\alpha = .55$). Although you chose not to discuss this, it falls below commonly accepted thresholds and should be acknowledged in the limitations section.
3. The power consideration is still vague. Please discuss in more detail your sample size with reference to current recommendations. In particular, comment on the adequacy of the number of Level-2 units and their ratio to Level-1 units, and specify the level of power that can be expected for various effect sizes.
4. The headings in the introduction do not yet conform to APA 7 format. Please correct them.
5. The following sentence appears to contain a typo; we assume you mean “contact”: “The study yielded bidirectional longitudinal associations between immigrant-descent minority students’ emotional fit to the majority norm and their content with majority peers the next year.”
6. For majority contact, please report the correlations between the two items at each wave instead of Cronbach’s alphas, which are not appropriate for scales with fewer than three items.
7. “We tested 2 hypotheses” should read “We tested two hypotheses.”
8. Please do not repeat statistical information that is already presented in tables—for example, “ $t(472.24) = 2.05$, $p = .041$, 95% confidence interval [CI; 0.01, 0.36]”.
9. Provide all figures as lossless SVG files exported from R and insert them directly into the Word document to ensure high resolution.
10. “...we tested the expectation that emotional fit with the majority norm, benefits minorities’ socio cultural adjustment in school contexts.” The comma after “norm” should be removed.
11. “...In such contexts, Minority students’ social outcomes at school (e.g., school engagement) may depend more on other processes...” Please do not capitalize the word “minority” in this sentence.
12. “...pay attention at the climate...” should read “attention to.”
13. Several inconsistencies remain in the reference list (incorrect years, missing references, alphabetical ordering, etc.). Please thoroughly address all issues identified in the updated citation report:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16LNZHdXPWiL78xobnWVqHhIJw1aOqsbS/view?usp=sharing>

Thank you for submitting your important work to our special issue. We look forward to receiving the revised manuscript by 25 July. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Best,

Jonas R. Kunst & David L. Sam